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REPORTS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF SUBSIDIARY BODIES: HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTIONS

Letter dated 11 April 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Turkey to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 11 April 1997 addressed to you by His Excellency Mr. Osman Ertuğ, Representative of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (see annex).

I should be grateful if the text of the present letter and its annex and appendix, which contains a letter dated 9 April 1997 addressed to you by His Excellency Mr. Taner Etkin, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Defence of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, could be circulated as a document of the Economic and Social Council under item 7 (d) of the provisional agenda.

(Signed) Hüseyin E. ÇELEM
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

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Annex

LETTER DATED 11 APRIL 1997 FROM MR. OSMAN ERTUĞ
TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to transmit herewith a letter dated 9 April 1997 addressed to you by His Excellency Mr. Taner Etkin, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Defence of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus, in connection with your report on the question of human rights in Cyprus (E/CN.4/1997/48 of 7 February 1997), which was submitted to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-third session.

I should be grateful if the text of the present letter and its appendix could be circulated as a document of the Economic and Social Council under item 7 (d) of the provisional agenda.

(Signed) Osman ERTUĞ
Representative
Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

Appendix

LETTER DATED 9 APRIL 1997 FROM MR. TANER ETKIN
TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

I have the honour to refer to your report on the question of human rights in Cyprus (E/CN.4/1997/48 of 7 February 1997), which was submitted to the Commission on Human Rights at its fifty-third session and to bring to your attention the following observations on that report.

The escalation of tension witnessed on the island over the last year, which is referred to in paragraph 6 of the report, is a direct result of the hostile policies and actions adopted by the Greek Cypriot administration. The Greek Cypriot administration's overt support for the provocative demonstration organized by the Greek Cypriot Bikers Federation in the summer of 1996, which has been described in paragraph 2 of your report on the United Nations Operation in Cyprus (S/1996/1016 of 10 December 1996) as being "a course of action that was bound to cause the utmost provocation", is a strong case in point. The resultant violence led to the heightening of tension and mistrust between the two sides, which has been further exacerbated by the Greek Cypriot side's conclusion of a sales contract with the Russian Federation for the purchase of the S-300 missile system.

Paragraph 7 of document E/CN.4/1997/48 refers to Security Council resolution 1092 (1996) of 23 December 1996, in which the Council called for the avoidance of actions which increase tension and expressed concern about the excessive level of military forces and armaments in the Republic of Cyprus and the rate at which they are being expanded, upgraded and modernized, including the introduction of sophisticated weaponry. However, the report fails to note that the Greek Cypriot side, with its highly provocative decision to purchase the S-300 missile system, is acting in direct contravention of the Council resolution and in total disregard of the extensive international criticism and the extremely negative consequences this has for the prospects of reaching a negotiated settlement.

The State Department of the United States of America outlined its position on this issue in the following statement on 6 January 1997:

> "... (the purchase of the missiles) will complicate efforts to achieve a lasting peace in Cyprus. The (Greek) Cypriot decision introduces a new and destabilizing element on the island and in the region at the very time that the international community is exploring ways to foster political cooperation to significantly advance a settlement ... This new missile system is even more troubling, as it threatens to take the arms build-up on Cyprus to a new and disturbing qualitative level ... We believe the conclusion of this sales contract makes any mediation effort that much more difficult, and it harms the political atmosphere."

The Greek Cypriot side has irresponsibly refused to reconsider the purchase despite its dangerous ramifications. According to the Greek Cypriot leader Mr. Glafcos Clerides, "Our acquisition of the missiles is not negotiable." The

Greek Cypriot administration has already issued the first down payment of £22 million for the missile system, which will be deployed in Southern Cyprus within the next 16 months.

Paragraph 13 of the report (E/CN.4/1997/48) suggests that Turkish Cypriots in the south are "accorded the same legal rights and privileges as Greek Cypriots". The fact that Turkish Cypriots are victims of harassment and overt discrimination has been acknowledged in a number of reports on the United Nations Operation in Cyprus. The poor living conditions and discriminatory treatment meted out to Turkish Cypriots residing in Southern Cyprus, has also been underscored by the United States State Department report entitled "Cyprus: humanitarian issues: the 'enclaved'" (September 1996), which was distributed among members of Congress. The report states that "The approximately 360 Turkish Cypriots who live in the south face problems in obtaining documents and complain of harassment, surveillance and some discrimination in obtaining jobs". The United States State Department human rights report for Cyprus (for 1995) also confirms that "There are persistent reports of harassment and surveillance by the Greek Cypriot police of Turkish Cypriots in the south." The situation persists today, as confirmed by the recently published 1996 report, which reiterates the continuation of harassment and victimization.

In the immediate aftermath of the violent Greek Cypriot demonstrations in August 1996, attacks against Turkish Cypriots, their property and even their places of worship have become commonplace, both in the south and in the mixed village of Pile, located inside the buffer zone. In your latest report (S/1996/1016 of 10 December 1996), it was observed that the Turkish Cypriots living and working in the south had been "adversely affected" by the events in Dherinya. Paragraph 22 of the report states that "Following the incidents that took place in August and September 1996, UNFICYP was contacted by a number of Turkish Cypriots living in the southern part of the island who expressed concern for their safety".

The inhuman social, economic and racial discrimination suffered by Turkish Cypriots in the south has also recently been highlighted by the Greek Cypriot press Alithia, in its 30 December 1996 edition, also reported on the dire living conditions of the Turkish Cypriot community of Limassol. Contradicting the Greek Cypriot administration's propaganda rhetoric that Turkish Cypriots are granted equal rights and have equal access to State support and assistance, the paper reveals that their residential areas are in fact "plagued by poverty, suffering and unemployment". The report also states that the Greek Cypriot police severely restrict the freedom of movement of the 150 Turkish Cypriots in that area for surveillance purposes. Attention is drawn to the fact that "The Turkish quarter of Limassol is different from the other areas of the town, because there are no new buildings there. Furthermore tourists are advised not to visit the area". The dilapidated condition of the houses and the absence of electricity and running water add to the misery of the people living there.

Regarding the issue of Greek Cypriots living in Northern Cyprus (see E/CN.4/1997/48, para. 15), it ought to be stressed that the Turkish Cypriot authorities do not practise any discriminatory policy towards Greek Cypriots in the Karpas region. In fact in November 1995, the Turkish Cypriot authorities adopted a series of unilateral good-will measures aimed at further improving the

living standards of the Greek Cypriots residing in the Karpas region. The above-mentioned United States State Department paper on this issue states that "Today, there are over 500 Greek Cypriots living in the Karpas area. These Greek Cypriots are known in the south as the 'enclaved'. While their living standards are lower than that in the south, they are on a par with those of Turkish Cypriots in the area".

Regarding medical care (see E/CN.4/1997/48, para. 16), adequate health centres of the Ministry of Health of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus serve the local population (Turkish Cypriots, Greek Cypriots and Maronites) in the Karpas and Girne areas. The local population has unrestricted access to the health care facilities. Local health centres in the Karpas peninsula are situated in Dipkarpaz and Yeni Erenköy. In cases where the said medical centres fall short of providing the necessary medical treatment, patients are transferred to the Gazi Magosa or Lefkoşa State Hospitals for treatment and, where Greek Cypriots are concerned, upon request, they can be transferred to the south. In the same manner, Maronites living in Koruçam, Özhan and Karpaşa have access to medical services provided at the neighbouring areas of Tepebaşi, Lapta and Girne.

Regarding cultural heritage (see E/CN.4/1997/48, para. 19), the Department of Antiquities and Museums of the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus maintains antiquities with limited financial and technical resources. For example, the extensive repair work carried out at the Apostolos Andreas monastery has now been completed, as has the road leading to it, improving access to the site. The Greek Cypriot side claims to be concerned about the condition of the historical heritage of the island, while simultaneously utilizing the issue as a propaganda device and blocking the provision of aid for the upkeep of cultural property to the Turkish Cypriot authorities. In addition to this, they also hinder archaeologists and other scholars from conducting research and assisting the Antiquities Department in Northern Cyprus.

In this context, the condition of Turkish Islamic cultural heritage remaining in the south has not been mentioned in the report. Ottoman Turkish architecture in Southern Cyprus is under threat of disintegration due to the Greek Cypriot administration's failure to protect and preserve it. The grounds of both the Tahtakale and Ömerge Mosques, for example, have been left to degenerate into refuse piles. Furthermore, parallel to the border violence of last summer, Greek Cypriot elements displayed their enmity towards the Turkish Cypriot side by attacking the relics of the Islamic Turkish heritage of the island. On 12 August the Ömeriye Mosque in the Greek Cypriot sector of Nicosia was the target of an arson attach which damaged the historic structure of the building; the Ömeriye Mosque was subject to a similar attack in March 1990. This act of desecration was promptly followed by another, where on 14 August a mosque in the town of Limassol was also damaged by fire.

In paragraph 20, the report suggests that the Turkish Cypriot authorities "refuse" to allow the appointment of Greek Cypriot teachers for the education of Greek Cypriot children in the Karpas district. There are currently three Greek Cypriot teachers charged with the education of Greek Cypriot children in the area, which is conducted with books and literature sent from Southern Cyprus.

Unfortunately, one Greek Cypriot teacher, Eleni Foka, continues to exploit her position as a teacher in order to disseminate nationalistic propaganda and to make anti-Turkish statements both in her classes and outside, thereby serving to increase tension between the two communities in the area. The Turkish Cypriot side has repeatedly stressed its objection regarding Ms. Foka's reprehensible conduct to Your Excellency's Deputy Special Representative on the island. Two years ago the Greek Cypriot leaders, Glafcos Clerides, did extend a promise to remove Ms. Foka from her position, which he has failed to honour, and he has subsequently chosen to award her with further support and financial remuneration.

Finally, Turkish Cypriot workers who were dismissed in a blatant show of racial discrimination and intolerance by Greek Cypriot contractors in the south are still denied the right of employment despite the remonstrations issued by the United Nations Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) (see E/CN.4/1997/48, para. 23).

At a time when the United Nations is engaged in an increased effort aimed at the resumption of direct result-oriented talks between the two sides, the publication of this latest report on the human rights situation in Cyprus, which merely serves to offer the Greek Cypriot side propaganda material to use against the Turkish Cypriot side, is unfortunate and unproductive.

I sincerely hope that Your Excellency will make sure that in future reports the legitimate views and concerns of the Turkish Cypriot side are taken into account and that a balanced assessment is reflected on all issues pertaining to Cyprus.

(Signed) Taner ETKIN
Minister of Foreign Affairs
and Defence